
LESSON 12

COLD WAR STRATEGY AND BEYOND: KOREA AND VIETNAM CASE STUDIES

Introduction

Purpose	<p>This lesson explains the strategic decisions involving the Korean and Vietnam wars. Instruction focuses on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">wWhy the wars beganwHow civilian leaders saw the warswHow military leaders interpreted the strategic guidance they received from their civilian leaders <p>This lesson examines the ends, ways, and means of U.S. and Soviet strategies in Korea and Vietnam.</p>
Why Study Cold War Strategy?	<p>By studying the policies of the Korean and Vietnam Wars, you will begin to understand the reasoning behind the strategic decisions made during this era..</p> <p>The legacy of these wars remains today. You must understand the strategic decisions behind these conflicts to better understand their significance and to address decisions now being made in a new and different strategic environment.</p>

Continued on next page

Introduction, Continued

Relationship to Other Instruction	<p>This lesson</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">wContinues the study of the strategies of the major warswBuilds on your knowledge of strategywProvides the foundation to study the connection between national objectives and military objectives. You will make this study in <i>Operational Level of War</i> (8803). <p>You will also apply instruction on the Cold War in the <i>Warfighting From the Sea</i> (8804 through 8808) portion of the Command and Staff College Distance Education Program (CSCDEP).</p>
Study Time	<p>This lesson, including the issues for consideration, will require about 5 hours of study.</p>

Educational Objectives

Strategic Objectives	State the strategic objectives of the Korean and Vietnam wars, focusing on whether these objectives were achievable by force and if the military means chosen by soldiers and statesmen were appropriate to intended political ends. [JPME Area 3d]
Strategy and Policy	Explain the difference between strategy and policy. [JPME Area 3d, 3e]
Civil-Military Relations	Summarize the civil-military relationships in the U.S. during the Korean and Vietnam wars. [JPME Area 3a]
Postwar Settlements	Review the Korean and Vietnamese postwar settlements in relation to stated objectives and their effect on the international order. [JPME Area 3d]
Coalition Warfare	Explore the impact of coalition warfare on the international environment. [JPME Area 3a]
JPME Areas/ Objectives/Hours (accounting data)	3/a/0.5 3/d/1.0 3/e/1.0

Lesson Overview

The Cold War The Cold War is the name for the diplomatic and military impasse following the Second World War. For over 40 years following the end of World War II, the United States and the Soviet Union competed in an atmosphere of international rivalry.

The U.S. policy of containment focused on preventing Soviet expansionism in Europe and beyond. The results were peripheral confrontations in Korea, Vietnam, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, Afghanistan, etc. as opposed to wars in Western Europe, the United States, or the Soviet Union.

Onset of the Cold War The onset of the Cold War coincided with the decline of European domination of the developing world. Approximately one hundred new sovereign states emerged from the ruins of European colonialism. Most new nations were established relatively peacefully, but some achieved independence only after bloody and protracted wars.

The superpowers claimed to have vital interests in these struggles. Assessed as major threats to American interests, wars of national liberation generated a response called the doctrine of counterinsurgency.

Containment Containment was the U.S. strategy to reduce communist expansion, particularly in response to Soviet aggression in Europe and elsewhere. The basis of the strategy was outlined in National Security Memorandum 68 (NSC 68). Both containment and NSC 68 were subjected to different policies by successive U.S. presidents. However, the overall U.S. strategic objective vis-a-vis Soviet expansionism remained unchanged.

Failure of Collective Security If World War II was the ultimate example of total war, the Korean conflict began the return to limited engagement. The hoped-for collective security under the United Nations failed under the pressures of Soviet expansionism, turbulent decolonization, regional conflict, and the superpower rivalry of the Cold War.

Continued on next page

Lesson Overview, Continued

Vietnam

Assessed as major threats to American interests, wars of national liberation generated the doctrine of counterinsurgency. The continuing perception of an aggressive Communist block and the enduring strategy of containment and flexible response, shaped by the Korean War experience, formed the basis for the U.S. strategy in Vietnam.

Directly intervening in Vietnam after years of assistance to the French and South Vietnamese governments, the United States sought war and pursued aims short of the overthrow of the adversary's government in a revolutionary setting.

Impact on Military Strategy

The Vietnam War had a significant impact on the subsequent development of military strategy, on domestic politics, and on foreign policy. More important, this war centered on the intricate and at times troubling relationship between the political and the military aspects of national security.

Required Reading

Strategic Level of War Readings Kissinger, Henry A. *Diplomacy*. New York: Touchstone, 1994, pp. 473 to 492, 643 to 673, 762 to 803. This reading is located immediately following this lesson, pp. L-3 to L-95. Kissinger's work covers three centuries of history, examining the emergence of modern diplomacy. As a participant in many of the most important diplomatic events of recent decades, he is able to paint a detailed picture of world leaders from de Gaulle to Mao Tse-tung to Gorbachev. Kissinger analyzes the differing styles of diplomacy and examines the ways various countries conduct foreign policy.

For Further Study

Supplemental Reading

The reading listed is **not** required. It is provided as a recommended source of additional information about topics in this lesson that may interest you. It will increase your knowledge and augment your understanding of this lesson.

Kissinger, Henry A. *Diplomacy*. New York: Touchstone, 1994, pp. 423 to 472.

Issues For Consideration

Containment	What was the policy of containment and why did it endure?
Korean Intervention	Why did the U.S. intervene in Korea in 1950, and how and why did U.S. objectives evolve through 1953?
American and North Korean Strategies	Compare the American and North Korean strategies during the war. Were they appropriate to their respective policy objectives? Did U.S. operational actions support its strategy? Did North Korean operational actions support its strategy?
U.S. Objectives in Vietnam	What were the U.S. strategic objectives on entering the war in Vietnam? How did these objectives evolve?
American and Communist Strategies in Vietnam	Compare the American and Vietnamese strategies during the war. Were they appropriate to their respective policy objectives?
Alternative U.S. Strategies in Vietnam	Given the policy of containment, were there any alternatives to the strategies the U.S. employed in Vietnam? If not, why not? If there were, what would they have been and why might they have worked?